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Committee on Science and Technology Passes Rep. Luján's Environmental Research Parks Bill

Legislation to Authorize \$5 Million Annually to LANL, \$35 Million to Research Parks Nationally, Moves to House Floor

Washington, DC - Today, the full Committee on Science and Technology approved Rep. Ben Ray Luján's legislation (H.R. 2729) to formally authorize existing National Environmental Research Parks (NERPs). It will now move onto the House floor for passage.

"My bill formally authorizes seven National Environmental Research Parks located at National Laboratories within six major ecological regions of the United States," said Rep. Luján. "The Research Park at Los Alamos National Laboratory includes a landscape of canyons, mesas, mountains, and the Rio Grande, providing a diverse range of ecosystems to explore. The Research Park conducts ongoing environmental studies on topics ranging from contaminant transport to climate change effects resulting from human impact on land. Los Alamos National Laboratory and the Pajarito Plateau it rests on have been at the center of over 125 publications related to ecology and the interaction between lab operations and the environment."

"The Research Parks are one of our nation's most valuable environmental research assets. It is time for them to be recognized in law and explicitly provided the resources they need to continue their valuable work. This legislation supports the Research Parks' research and monitoring programs. It authorizes core funding that will ensure that they can continue the important work they already perform, as well as provide opportunities to expand on new research and energy development initiatives. This bill also establishes a Research Parks coordinator that will assist the Parks in collaborating with each other. Additionally, it encourages environmental science education and public outreach activities."

"I am excited to work on this important legislation as it moves forward toward passage. I look forward to working on future legislation that seeks to improve environmental science, education, and energy research and development programs in our National Laboratories."

Rep. Luján introduced the legislation, which promotes environmental science programs at Los Alamos National Laboratory by authorizing funding for its NERP as well as for six other NERPs throughout the country.

The research conducted at the NERPs, which have existed for decades, produces valuable data that can be used to fight climate change and clean up contaminated sites. With the new authorization and consistent funding, they can expand their research activities. Rep. Luján's legislation authorizes \$5,000,000 for each NERP for each of the fiscal years 2010 through 2014.

"These parks are unique outdoor laboratories that offer secure settings for long-term research on a broad range of subjects, including wildlife biology, ecology, climate change effects, and maintenance of freshwater ecosystems," Rep. Luján said when the legislation was introduced. "The parks also provide rich environments for training future researchers and introducing the public to environmental sciences."

Earlier this month, the Energy and Environment Subcommittee of the Committee on Science and Technology held a hearing that examined climate and environmental research programs conducted by the Department of Energy-which included discussion on Rep. Luján's NERP bill. Dr. Nate McDowell of Los Alamos National Laboratory gave testimony at the hearing.

"I'm glad that we conducted a hearing to discuss Department of Energy's environmental research along with the National Energy Research Park legislation I introduced last week," said Rep. Luján after the hearing. "The witnesses provided excellent testimony that will help shape future efforts to address issues from climate change to contamination."

Dr. Nate McDowell of Los Alamos National Laboratory talked about the advanced laser facility at the Los Alamos NERP, which uses laser technology to observe and monitor carbon dioxide emissions. He discussed the importance of coordination between the NERPs and collaboration on their respective research projects. He also talked about how NERPs are not consistently funded and often do not have the necessary resources to utilize their full environmental research potential.

For more information about the Department of Energy's National Energy Research Parks, visit <http://www.nerp.rnl.gov/>.

For more information about the Los Alamos National Environmental Research Park, visit http://www.lanl.gov/orgs/tt/partnering/user_facility/facilities/envIRON_research.shtml.

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